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ABSTRACT

The study surveyed 63 institutions of higher education who sought behavioral disorders faculty through advertisements in the "Chronicle of Higher Education." Thirty-nine institutions responded to the questionnaire about faculty search and their academic departments. Only 71% indicated that they had found a suitable faculty member. The average number of applicants was 20.7, and the average search took 7.7 months. Of the positions filled, 81.5% were by individuals holding doctoral degrees, another 6% had completed all requirements for a doctoral degree except the dissertation, and 12.5% were non-doctoral applicants. Though experienced applicants with teaching and research skills were considered most desirable, 85% reported employing an individual characterized as having limited or no experience. Seventy percent of all respondents reported that they were dissatisfied with the overall quality of the applicants for their position. Seventy-nine percent reported that there was an adequate number of female applicants, but 95% indicated that there was an inadequate number of minority applicants. It is concluded that higher education institutions should consider making faculty positions more attractive and competitive, and leadership preparation programs need to select students who are committed to careers in teacher education. Includes 15 references. (JDD)

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Are More Teacher Educators for Behavioral Disorders Needed?

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Paper presented the annual TECBD Conference on Severe Behavior Disorders of Children and Youth; Tempe, AZ; November, 1989.

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Abstract

A survey was conducted to obtain data to aid in assessing the need for leadership personnel for teacher education. The specific focus was on the need for teacher educators for the special education area of behavioral disorders. Data was derived from a 17-item questionnaire sent to 63 institutions of higher education (IHEs). A total of 39 (62%) responded. The data strongly indicate there is a short-fall of qualified personnel to fill present and future needs of IHEs in the area of behavioral disorders.

Are More Teacher Educators for Behavioral Disorders Needed?

A recent Rand Corporation study (Darling-Hammond, 1984), reported that special education was one of three critical areas of teacher shortage. In part, this shortage is attributable to increases in services for handicapped students. One population that has experienced a steady growth in services in recent years is the behaviorally disordered (seriously emotionally disturbed). This trend toward increasing service to students with behavioral disorders has been documented by Algozzine and Kormek (1985) and Darling-Hammond (1984). In an analysis of national special education service trends, a positive slope was found for four of 10 service categories examined. One of these four was the seriously emotionally disturbed. According to the serial Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, during the past ten years, service to students with behavioral disorders has gone from

approximately .54% to about .95% of the school-aged population. This upward trend in service level represents an increase of approximately 76%, or an average of 7.6% per year. Since the prevalence of behavioral disorders is probably between 2% and 7%, and current service level is only 1%, continued growth in services and need for classroom teachers can be expected.

The above clearly indicates an increasing need for behavioral disorders teachers generated by expansion of services to this historically under-identified population (Center & Obringer, 1987; Center & Eden, in press; Long, 1983). In addition to expansion, there is a continuing need for teachers to replace those leaving the field. Behavioral disorders may have one of the highest teacher attrition rates in education. One study (Lawrenson & McKinnon, 1982) found an attrition rate of 48% over a three year period for teachers of students with behavioral disorders. In fact, some states, e.g., Georgia, have had to implement emergency certification procedures in order to meet the demand for behavioral disorders teachers (Georgia State Department of Education, 1988).

Given the apparent need for teachers indicated by the above, there follows the question, is there a sufficient supply of faculty to prepare these teachers? Smith and Lovett (1987) report an estimated attrition rate for existing special education faculty of 10% per year due to retirement. These authors report that this rate is expected to accelerate after 1993. Assuming an average of one behavioral disorders faculty member for each of the 724 existing programs in the U.S. in 1986, there are approximately 724 behavioral disorders teacher educators currently employed by institutions of higher education (IHEs).

A 10% attrition rate suggests a replacement need of approximately 72 new faculty per year. This figure does not reflect attrition due to early retirement, death, illness, or for various personal reasons, e.g., low pay (Smith & Lovett, 1987) or job dissatisfaction (Prehm, 1984; Zabel, Smith, & White, 1984). Smith and Lovett report that 48% of full professors indicate that they would take early retirement if it was available. There is currently a trend in many IHEs to offer early retirement programs, so attrition due to retirement

could exceed the 10% estimate. The approximate replacement need of 72 also fails to reflect positions that may become available due to program expansion. It is not unreasonable to project that in the near future there will be a potential need to fill 100 behavioral disorders faculty positions per year.

Smith and Lovett (1987) also report data that indicate the major doctoral granting institutions are turning out, on the average, slightly less than 100 special education doctoral graduates, in all areas of special education, per year. Recently, the National Clearinghouse on Professions in Special Education (1988) reported that only seven doctoral degrees were awarded in "emotional disturbance" during the period 1982-83 to 1985-86. This average output of approximately two graduates per year is further supported by statistics collected by the Office or Educational Research and Improvement (1988). Clearly, such a limited supply of new personnel is grossly insufficient to meet the potential need estimate of 100 behavioral disorders faculty per year.

This apparent short-fall is further aggravated by the likelihood that not all of these graduates choose to

go into teacher education. Bowne and Schuster (1986) report that only 27% of new Ph.D. graduates in Arts and Sciences choose careers in higher education. A similar statistic for special education is not available. However, given the low salaries and job dissatisfaction cited earlier, and based on the career choices of our graduates here at Georgia State University (GSU), it is probably safe to assume that less than half of the new doctoral graduates in special education choose a career in higher education. In fact, our experience at GSU with special education graduates closely approximates the findings for Arts and Sciences reported above. In the past 15 years, approximately 20% of our graduates in behavioral disorders, have chosen to take positions in IHEs. In view of the above discussion, the findings of Smith, Pierce, and Keyes (1988) that IHEs are currently experiencing difficulty in obtaining faculty to fill positions in behavioral disorders is not surprising.

Behavioral disorders faculty at IHEs need an empirical data base upon which to base decisions about leadership preparation programs and to document need in

grant proposals soliciting funds to support leadership preparation in behavioral disorders. The importance of empirical documentation of need in grant proposals seeking federal funds has recently been emphasized by the U.S. Department of Education (Thomas & Sutherland, 1987). The present study was undertaken to obtain data to aid in the evaluation of the need in behavioral disorders for personnel preparation at the leadership level. The study undertook a national survey of IHEs, seeking behavioral disorders faculty, to obtain current information about personnel needs and related data.

The questions we attempted to answer included the following:

1. Is there a shortage of faculty with BD backgrounds adequate to train teachers to work with students with behavioral problems?
2. If there is a shortage, what are some of the contributing factors?
3. Is the quality of the current applicant pool satisfactory?
4. Are there a sufficient number of minority personnel currently available to fill faculty positions?

Method

To obtain subjects for this survey, an analysis of position ads in the Chronicle of Higher Education was conducted during a one-year period beginning in the summer of 1987 and ending in the summer of 1988. A total of 63 advertisements seeking faculty in behavioral disorders or a cross-categorical person whose skills included behavioral disorders were located.

The second step was to construct a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions related to subjects' faculty search and information about their academic departments. The survey included questions related to success in recruitment, satisfaction with the applicant pool, the skills required of the prospective faculty, whether the position was cross-categorical, and sex and racial distributions of the applicants. The survey questions are presented in Table One.

Insert Table One

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The questionnaire was then sent, in the fall of

1988, to the identified colleges and universities. A cover letter indicated that the recipients had been identified through their recent position ad in the Chronicle of Higher Education seeking a faculty member in the area of behavioral disorders or one with cross-categorical preparation that included behavioral disorders. The letter also requested their cooperation in obtaining information about the current market for faculty with a behavioral disorders background.

Results

Sixty-three institutions were contacted and 39 (62%) responded. The complete results of the survey are presented in Table One. Only 71% indicated that they had found a suitable faculty member. The average number of applicants was 20.7, and the average search took 7.7 months. Of the positions filled, 81.5% were by individuals holding the doctoral degree, another 6% had completed all requirements for a doctoral degree, except the dissertation, and 12.5% were non-doctoral applicants.

Eight percent of the positions advertised were open due to program expansion and 92% were replacement positions. Twenty percent of the replacement positions,

and 18.5% of all positions, were open due to retirements. The respondents also indicated that, on average, 37.8% of their existing faculty members were age 50 or above and 10.8% were age 60 or above. Seventy-four percent of the replacement positions, and 68% of all positions, were open due to turn-over of faculty. The remaining 6% of the replacement positions, and 5.5% of all positions, were positions open for other reasons excluding death or ill health.

The two most sought-after skills in applicants were teaching and research. An experienced applicant with teaching and research skills was considered most desireable. However, 85% reported employing an individual characterized as having limited or no experience. For those IHEs seeking a cross-categorical faculty member, the most sought-after area of expertise was behavioral disorders, with learning disabilities coming in second. The area most frequently reported as unavailable in applicants for cross-categorical positions was learning disabilities, with behavioral disorders coming in second.

Ninety-four percent of those who filled their

advertised position reported that the individual they employed had satisfactory skills in the areas they were looking for. However, seventy percent of all respondents reported that they were dissatisfied with the overall quality of the applicants for their position. Based on their faculty search experiences, 72.5% also indicated they were dissatisfied with the available pool of potential faculty. Seventy-nine percent reported that there was an adequate number of female applicants, but 95% indicated that there was an inadequate number of minority applicants.

Of the faculty members hired, 68% were employed as assistant professors. The average age of the employed individuals was 40.5 years. Fifty-eight percent of those hired were female and only 10% were minority group members.

Discussion

The first question examined was: Is there a shortage of faculty with BD backgrounds adequate to train teachers to work with students with behavioral problems? Almost 29% of our respondents had failed to find a suitable faculty member and another 12.5% had hired a non-doctoral level person to fill their

position. Thus, 41.5% of the respondents failed to satisfactorily fill their faculty vacancies. These results indicate a significant short-fall of behavioral disorders faculty was experienced during the year covered by this study.

The second question was: If there is a shortage, what are some of the contributing factors? Three contributing factors were identified: retirement, program expansion, and attrition due to reasons other than retirement.

Among IHEs seeking new faculty In the area of behavioral disorders, an attrition rate due to retirement of 18.5% was reported. It is not known whether some of these retirements were due to early retirement. Early retirements might explain the higher figure found in this study in contrast to Smith and Lovett's (1987) retirement estimate of 10%.

Approximately 11% of the faculty in departments responding to this survey were 60 years of age or above which is consistent with Smith and Lovett's estimate. These investigators also predicted that retirements would accelerate after 1993. The findings in this study

support that prediction, since approximately 28% of the faculty in departments responding to this survey were between the ages of 50 and 60. Thus, a substantial number of these faculty will be reaching retirement age in the 1990's.

Of the positions open in the special education programs surveyed, 8% were due to program expansions. This figure supports Smith and Lovett's (1987) finding that special education teacher preparation programs are increasing, by an average of 1.2% per year, in order to meet the growing demand for special education teachers. Based on a 10% attrition rate (Smith & Lovett, 1987) due to retirement, we earlier estimated the need for replacement faculty in behavioral disorders could be as high as 72 per year for the foreseeable future. If the retirement figure of 18.5% found in this study is used, the number of faculty that need to be replaced may be as high as 134 per year.

Applying the 8% expansion rate found in this study, it can be estimated that an additional 58 faculty members per year may be needed. Further, this study found that 5.5% of all positions were open for reasons other than retirement, turn-over, death, or ill health.

This suggests that there may be an attrition out of the field, for reasons other than retirement, as high as 5.5%. This figure indicates another estimated 40 faculty per year leaving the field of behavioral disorders. Collectively, these findings indicate a possible attrition figure as high as 232 faculty per year. This estimate based upon the examination of need during a one year period may not be representative of longer term needs. Even if this estimate is off by as much as 75%, the remaining need represents a substantial personnel short-fall in behavioral disorders in contrast to the current supply of approximately two per year (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1988).

As discussed earlier, there is reason to believe that perhaps as few as one-fourth of doctoral graduates take positions in IHEs. If this is true, leadership preparation programs might have to produce four times the estimated IHE need for there to be an adequate supply of teacher educators. Since the number of doctoral level graduates in behavioral disorders during a recent four-year period was only seven (National Clearinghouse on Professions in Special Education,

1988), a significant need for doctoral level preparation in behavioral disorders is indicated.

The third question asked: Is the quality of the current applicant pool satisfactory? Over 70% of the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the overall quality of the available pool of applicants. This finding suggest that in order to meet the need for high quality personnel by IHEs, preparation programs must concentrate on the skills sought by IHEs seeking faculty. The most critical skills being sought, and generally found deficient in the applicant pool, were teaching and research skills. In addition to these skills, respondents also placed importance on professional experience and writing skills. Further, it would appear from our findings that behavioral disorders personnel preparation programs should attempt to produce personnel who have strength in a related area such as learning disabilities.

The last question raised was: Are there a sufficient number of minority personnel currently available to fill faculty positions? Ninety five percent of the respondents indicated that there was an insufficient number of potential behavioral disorders

faculty from minority groups. This suggests either too little is being done to recruit minorities into leadership preparation programs or they are not sufficiently attracted by careers in higher education. One possible explanation for a lack of success at recruiting high quality minority students is competition with other fields, e.g., business. Another possibility is that minority students are completing leadership preparation programs but not choosing careers in higher education. If this is the case, IHEs are failing in a recruitment competition with other potential employers, e.g., public schools.

In conclusion, due to the apparently low number of graduates choosing careers in IHEs, preparation programs need to concentrate on recruiting students who have teacher education as their primary career objective. It also appears that IHEs need to take steps to deal with some of the factors that are contributing to dissatisfaction with careers in teacher education, e.g., low pay. No doubt such dissatisfactions are accelerating the trend toward early retirement, leaving the field for other careers, and ultimately the failure

to choose teacher education as a career by many doctoral graduates in behavioral disorders. The implications of this survey are that IHEs should consider making faculty positions more attractive and competitive, and leadership preparation programs need to select students who are committed to careers in teacher education.

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1. Did you locate a suitable candidate for your position?

   Yes = .71 No = .29

2. If yes, how long did your search take? Avg. 7.7 months

3. How many applicants did you have for the advertised position?

   Avg. = 20.7 applicants

4. The position to be filled was open due to:

   Expansion: .08 Replacement: .92

5. If you checked replacement, was the position open because of:

   Retirement: .20 Death/Illness: .00

   Faculty turn-over: .74 Other: .06

6. Rank (1-6) in order of importance to you the following applicant characteristics (mean rankings follow):

   Teaching skills: 1.5 Grant skills: 4.6

   Writing skills: 4.1 Service skills: 4.8

   Research skills: 3.4 Experience: 3.4

7. Overall, how would you characterize the quality of <u>all</u> applicants relative to #6 above?

   Excellent: .075 Fair: .55

   Good: .225 Poor: .15

8. If you hired someone, how well did the person match-up with your needs as reflected in #6 above?

   Very well: .66 Somewhat: .06

   Satisfactorily: .28 Unsatisfactorily: .00

9. If your position was generic (cross categorical) which of the following content areas were you looking for in an applicant?

   Behavior Disorders: .41 Speech and Language: .00

   Learning Disabilities: .32 Gifted: .01

   Mental Retardation: .25 Other: .10

10. If you failed to find one of the content areas you were looking for, which one was it?

    Behavior Disorders: .22 Speech and Language: .11

    Learning Disabilities: .33 Gifted: .00

    Mental Retardation: .00 Other: .33

11. Were there an adequate number of qualified applicants who were:

    Female: Yes = .79

    Minority group members: Yes = .05

12. Overall, how would your characterize the majority of applicants relative to college/university experience?

    Considerable experience: .15

    Limited experience: .80

    No experience: .05

13. If you hired someone, how would you classify this individual?

    Experienced, doctoral level person: .625

    Inexperienced doctoral level person: .19

    An ABD person: .06

    Non-doctoral level person: .125

14. If you hired an experienced person, at what level was this person employed?

    Assistant Professor: .68

    Associate Professor: .25

    Full Professor: .07

15. If you hired someone, what was their:

    Approximate age?: Avg. = 40.5 years

    Sex?: Male = .42 Female: .58

    Minority status?: Yes = .10 No = .90

16. Below, please indicate the number of your faculty members in each age category:

20's: .003	50's: .27
30's: .23	60's: .105
40's: .38	70's: .003

17. Based on your experience with this search, what is your level of satisfaction with the available pool of potential faculty?

Very satisfied: .10	Somewhat satisfied: .375
Satisfied: .175	Dissatisfied: .35

Table One. The questions and summary of response data for the survey of IHEs advertising for a faculty member with a background in behavioral disorders during a one year period.